

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
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September is “Campus Fire Safety Month”

The **Center for Campus Fire Safety** has designated September as “Campus Fire Safety Month” with the goal of raising national awareness about the importance of protecting our young adults. From January 2000 through December 15, 2006, there were 94 fire deaths (3 in West Virginia) and nearly 400 reported injuries **due to fire occurring in college housing** such as dorms, fraternities, sororities and barracks.

According to the **Center**, common factors in a number of these fires include:

- Lack of automatic fire sprinklers
- Missing or disabled smoke alarms
- Careless disposal of smoking materials
- Alcohol consumption

The Facts

In cases where fire fatalities occurred on college campuses, alcohol was a factor. There is a strong link between alcohol and fire deaths. In many adult fire fatalities, victims were under the influence at the time of the fire. Alcohol abuse often impairs judgment and hampers evacuation efforts.

On campus, cooking is the leading cause of fire injuries, closely followed by careless smoking and arson.

What factors contribute to the problem of dormitory housing fires?

- Improper use of 911 notification systems delays emergency response.
- Student apathy is prevalent. Many are unaware that fire is a risk or threat.
- Evacuation efforts are hindered since fire alarms are often ignored.
- Building evacuations are delayed due to lack of preparation & preplanning.
- Vandalized and improperly maintained smoke alarms and fire alarm systems inhibit early detection of fires.
- Misuse of cooking appliances, overloaded electrical circuits and extension cords increase the risk of fires.

The WV State Fire Marshal's Office provides the following tips from the U.S. Fire Administration to help reduce and prevent loss of life and property in on- and off-campus housing:

- Provide students with a program for fire safety and prevention.
- Teach students how to properly notify the fire department using the 911 system.
- Install smoke alarms in every dormitory room and every level of housing facilities. (Check with the WV State Fire Marshal's Office for code requirements.)
- Maintain and regularly test smoke alarms and fire alarm systems. Replace smoke alarm batteries every semester.
- Regularly inspect rooms and buildings for fire hazards. Ask your local fire department for assistance.
- Inspect exit doors and windows and make sure they're working properly.
- Create and update detailed floor plans of buildings and post them in a conspicuous place for use by emergency personnel, resident advisors and students.
- Conduct fire drills and practice escape routes and evacuation plans. *Urge students to take each alarm seriously.*
- Don't overload electrical outlets and use extension cords properly.
- Learn to properly use and maintain heating and cooking appliances.

NOTE: The Center for Campus Fire Safety is a non-profit organization devoted to reducing fires at campuses across the nation through education advocacy. A collection of free resources for campus fire safety professionals to use are available at the Center's website, including lesson plans, presentations and more. Visit the Center's website at www.campusfire.org to learn more.

Additional information is also available through the U.S. Fire Administration's website: www.usfa.fema.gov, the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) at www.nfpa.org, and the Consumer Product Safety Commission at www.cpsc.gov.

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